



NJDOE News

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Acting Commissioner Davy Releases 2006 Comparative Spending Guide; Urges Public to Participate in School Budget Process

Acting Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy today released the 2006 *Comparative Spending Guide*. The guide is a statistical report to the public that details how local school districts in New Jersey allocate their financial resources.

The *Comparative Spending Guide*, found online at:

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/guide/2006/>

provides local educators and citizens with information about a school district's annual budget. It ranks similar school districts in 14 of 15 spending categories, such as total administrative costs or total classroom instruction, and in four staffing indicators, such as student-teacher ratios and faculty-administrative staff ratios.

It presents spending data over time, including spending budgeted for this year, for the public to review and discuss with their local school boards.

Acting Commissioner Davy said the guide was being released today because public hearings on school district budgets begin on March 27. Annual school elections, during which budgets are voted upon, will take place on April 18.

"This year, we are all faced with extraordinary challenges in keeping costs down without sacrificing quality in our public schools," she continued. "I urge the public to participate in the school budget process this year and to use the *Comparative Spending Guide* to stimulate discussions about their local school spending plans."

Each indicator in the *Comparative Spending Guide* presents costs on a per pupil basis, with three years of data presented; the four staffing indicators contain two years of data. The total per pupil cost indicator reflects all spending common to school districts and includes total current expense and spending for early childhood education programs, demonstrably effective programs, special education, bilingual education, supplemental instruction, county vocational schools and adult and post-secondary education.

Spending areas not included in the guide are pensions, transportation and tuition expenses because they can vary widely from district to district.

According to the new guide released today, total budgeted comparative costs statewide average \$11,554 in the current school year, up 3.8 percent from the previous year. Classroom instruction makes up the majority of these expenditures at \$6,822 pupil, representing 59 percent of the total budgeted comparative cost per pupil and up \$224, or 3.4 percent from the previous year.

A further breakdown of the total comparative cost indicates that support services, such as guidance and nursing services, account for \$1,768, or 15.3 percent of the total comparative cost per pupil, an increase of \$113, or 6.8 percent, from the previous year. Administrative costs, at \$1,289, or 11.2 percent of the total comparative cost per pupil, represent an increase of 1.8 percent from the previous year.

The *Comparative Spending Guide* compares school districts of similar size with each other. The groups are: K-6; K-8 (with subgroupings of enrollments from 0-399, 400-750 and more than 750); K-12 (with subgroupings of enrollments from 0-1,800; 1,801 to 3,500; and more than 3,500); grades 7-12 and 9-12; county special services; county vocational schools; and charter schools.

Districts are listed alphabetically and are ranked low to high in spending for each of three years, within their subgroups. All local school districts were given an opportunity to review the information in the guide prior to its release.

Acting Commissioner Davy noted that the guide, as a statistical document, cannot by itself present a complete picture on how schools invest in education. She encouraged parents and interested citizens to learn how their school spending patterns relate to the goals of their districts and changes in their communities.

Davy urged citizens to participate in the school development process and to cast informed votes in the annual school election, scheduled for April 18.